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SUBJECT: OSCE/PERMANENT COUNCIL: INTERVENTION ON
PRIORITIZING OSCE ACTIVITIES

1. Post is authorized to make the following statement at the April 30 Permanent Council meeting in Vienna:

Begin text:

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

With the discussion of the Program Budget Performance Report currently underway in the ACMF, we are reminded of our call last year for each participating State to think seriously about which OSCE programs are priorities for the organization, and which are not. We continue to believe that, in these times of limited resources and global financial crisis, it is imperative that we concentrate our efforts on those things the organization does best, and where it adds the most value.

While we all talk a lot about prioritization, we have not been as successful in articulating clear priorities to help guide the Secretariat in their preparation of the budget. The participating States should more clearly articulate a vision of the OSCE's priorities. Our organization cannot be all things to all States. We encourage the Chairmanship to lead a discussion during the upcoming Program Outline of what our priorities are, and what they are not. For the United States, we will continue to prioritize programs that advance the OSCE's core values, including strengthening the implementation of participating States, commitments in all three dimensions.

In preparation for that effort, we would like to suggest that each participating State identify its top priority programs. For example, last year's Program Outline contained roughly 90 distinct functional programs, excluding executive management and administrative support functions. We would like to propose that each State generate an indicative list of its top 30 priority programs. If all of these lists were compiled, it would generate an interesting rank order of programs widely supported, programs with some support, and programs with very little support at all. While there is no clear connection between low ratings and program elimination, using such a list would very much facilitate the hard work of determining where resources should be focused. If we combine that analysis also with a sober review of unspent OSCE resources in past years, and the programs that are historically inefficient in utilizing budget allocations, we believe we will significantly help our ACMF experts to move ahead on the 2010 Unified Budget proposal.

We recognize there will be those who would say that everything the organization does is somehow, by definition, a top priority. Such a viewpoint ignores the reality of scarce resources. Such a view also ignores the fact that some programs may have been useful ten or fifteen years ago, but may have lost their relevance over the course of the years. Yet other programs may, in fact, have successfully completed their tasks, but continue merely due to bureaucratic inertia. We believe that the prioritization exercise we propose will help us clean out these completed or expired programs, allowing the organization to focus on its true value added as

we move into the second decade of the 21st century.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.
CLINTON